

# **“To Help the Deceased Guild Brother to His Grave”: Guilds, Death and Funeral Arrangements in Late Medieval and Early Modern Norway, ca. 1300–1900**

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*This article examines the help the medieval guilds and the early modern craft guilds in Norway could provide when their members died, and how the Reformation of 1536 changed the extent of this help. For the medieval period, the paper discusses the funeral arrangements in urban guilds and rural guilds. For the early modern period, the discussion is limited to the towns, since few, if any rural guilds survived the Reformation.*

*The essay argues that aid to deceased members was essential both to the medieval guilds and the craft guilds that were founded after the Reformation, thus stressing a greater degree of continuity between the medieval guilds and the post-Reformation craft guilds than previous Norwegian research has claimed. The social and religious functions, exemplified by the funeral arrangements, were essential to the early modern craft guilds, as they were in the medieval guilds. Furthermore, there was a continuity in form in the various elements of which the help to the deceased consisted, including being with the dying in his last hours, waking over him, eating and drinking in his honour, following him in a procession to his grave and providing economic support for his funeral. However, the Reformation also constituted a major change, as guild chantries were confiscated, doctrine of purgatory was abolished, the masses for the deceased prohibited and intercession for the deceased made obsolete. Thus, the guilds that survived the Reformation and the new craft guilds that were founded afterward were forced to shift the focus of their help from the intercession for the dead to give them an honourable funeral. A second shift came after the craft guild reforms in the 1680s and 1690s, when attempts were made to limit the extent and the splendour of the funeral processions, and attendance at guild members' funerals were made optional. This led to the decline of the communal funeral and the privatisation of the Lutheran funeral ritual. Still, one aspect of the help, the financial support for their members' funerals, continued to be important right up to the dissolution of the Norwegian craft guilds in 1869.*

Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen (eds.)  
Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

**COLLEGIUM**

Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 18.  
Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. 152–183.

## Introduction: The Two Wills of Jochym Gherken

On 22 July 1527, Jochym Gherken, a *Bergenfahrer*<sup>1</sup> merchant and member of the Lübeck town council, met with the town scribe Jakob Dus in the town hall. Gherken, perhaps worried about death or being ill, wanted to make the necessary preparations for his own death, and met with Dus to have his will written down.<sup>2</sup> In his will, which still exists, Gherken bequeathed gifts to his family, friends, various churches, hospitals, monasteries, convents and guilds in Lübeck. However, being a *Bergenfahrer* merchant Gherken had strong ties to the Norwegian town of Bergen. Gherken had come to Bergen from Lübeck as a young boy to be trained in the stock-fish trade at the Hanseatic *Cunthor* in Bergen.<sup>3</sup> A few decades later, he returned to Lübeck and established himself there as a *Bergenfahrer* merchant, becoming a member of the town's *Bergenfahrer* guild,<sup>4</sup> and owning a *staven* or trading company in Bergen which was run on his behalf by his deputy and junior partner, Marten Elers.<sup>5</sup> Gherken's ties with Bergen are evident in his will through numerous bequeaths to persons and institutions, including Elers, several churches, monasteries and convents, the two poorhouses of St. George and St. Catherine, and two guilds, the Corpus Christi guild, and the St. Catherine's and St. Dorothy's guild, where, according to the will, he was still a member.

Sixteen years later, on 18 November 1543, the year before he died, Gherken, now the town mayor, had his will written down for a second time.<sup>6</sup> As in his first will, he made bequests to his family and friends in Lübeck and Bergen and the two poor houses in Bergen. However, no gifts were given to churches, convents or monasteries in the two towns, nor were there given any gifts to any guilds in the two towns.

The reason for this was the Reformation. Introduced to Lübeck in 1530 and to Denmark-Norway in 1536, the Lutheran Reformation marked a shift from a late medieval Catholic culture of death to an early modern Lutheran culture of death in Northern Europe. The late medieval culture of death was marked by the doctrine of purgatory and the belief that the living could intercede for the deceased, either by praying and singing masses for their souls or by buying letters of indulgence,

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1 *Bergenfahrer* was the common term for Hanseatic merchants that traded with the Norwegian town of Bergen, Bruns 1900.

2 The will was published by Friedrich Bruns in 1900, Bruns 1900, 150, no. 229. The original will is kept in the City Archives of Lübeck, Germany, Archive der Hansestadt Lübeck, Testamente 1527 Juli 22.

3 The *Cunthor* was the Hanseatic merchants' guild in Bergen. See Helle 1982; Haugland 2006; Haugland 2012.

4 The *Bergenfahrer* guild in Lübeck is first mentioned in 1393, Bruns 1900, XX, CXI–CXII.

5 For more on the *Bergenfahrer* merchants and their trading companies, see Bruns 1900; Helle 1982, 738–740.

6 Archive der Hansestadt Lübeck, Germany, Testamente 1543 Nov. 18.

both of which could shorten a soul's time in the purgatory. The masses for the dead and the letters of indulgence, based on the doctrine of purgatory, linked what the American scholar Craig M. Koslofsky has called the late medieval economy of salvation to the material economy of money, goods and services.<sup>7</sup>

This is clearly seen in the many preserved wills and deeds of gift from the late medieval period, including Gherken's first will from 1527, where money and landed property were given to the churches, monasteries, convents and guilds, which in turn could offer prayers and masses for the release of the donor's soul from purgatory. The Reformation radically changed this. Martin Luther (1483–1546) and the other early reformers, teaching a new doctrine of salvation by faith alone, rejected the Church doctrine of purgatory as well as the belief that the living could intercede for the dead, stating that such intercession was neither needed nor possible.<sup>8</sup> The rejection of purgatory was followed by laws prohibiting the practices associated with it, including vigils, masses for the dead and letters of indulgence. Furthermore, Church property was confiscated, including chantries and the landed property belonging to them, convents and monasteries were dissolved, and guilds were prohibited. This had huge consequences for the economy of salvation and its institutions, as the testators were no longer allowed to donate money or landed property in exchange for the reading of masses for their souls. The institutions on their side were either no longer allowed to offer such services, as was the case with the churches, or they were dissolved, as was the case with the convents, monasteries and guilds.

This explains why Gherken had his will made for the second time. Having converted to Protestantism, Gherken no longer needed to make bequests to religious institutions to be certain of salvation, nor was he allowed to do so. Furthermore, many of the institutions he had bequeathed goods to in 1527, including the Corpus Christi guild and the St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild in Bergen, no longer existed.<sup>9</sup>

Gercken's two wills demonstrate quite clearly the religious and social consequences of the Reformation. This paper will focus on some of these, notably the changes made to the funeral ritual, from the perspective of the guilds in Norway, of which Gherken's first will mentioned two, the Corpus Christi guild and the St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild in Bergen. The first guilds in Norway were probably founded in the twelfth century, and they flourished in the late medieval period.<sup>10</sup>

Founded by people from different social layers of the Norwegian medieval society, and for a whole range of different purposes, the Norwegian guilds still had

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7 See Koslofsky 2005, 11.

8 Koslofsky 2005, 2.

9 Haugland 2006.

10 Haugland 2012, 39–70.

important features in common, features they also shared with guilds in other parts of Western Europe. As pointed out by the German historian Otto Gerhard Oexle, the guilds were sworn communities. When founding a guild, all the members had sworn an oath, promising to follow a set of common norms or rules, which often were written down at a later stage (guild statutes), and to help and to protect each other. Whenever newcomers were admitted as members, they had to swear the same oath. The sworn community of the guild was often expressed through the language of ritual kinship; the members were called brothers and sisters, and the guild as a whole was often called a *fraternitas*, brotherhood.<sup>11</sup> The sworn bonds between the members was further strengthened by regular gatherings at which the members met to eat, drink and pray together, in Norwegian guild statutes usually called *gildedrikk* or *stæfni* (meeting) and held in a guild hall, the house of the master of the guild or in houses rented for the occasion.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, all guilds were religious communities. Fundamental to all were what Oexle calls *fraternitas* as a norm, to treat each other as brothers, a norm rooted in Christian ethics. Furthermore, most guilds had their own patron saint, and the religious activities of a guild were in part associated with the cult of the saint. They often held their guild gatherings at their patron saint's feasts, arranged and took part in processions venerating their patron saints, and founded chantries to their honour in churches, monasteries and convents.<sup>13</sup>

Because of their close relation to the Catholic Church, the Norwegian guilds, like guilds elsewhere in Northern Europe, came under attack from the new Lutheran state, resulting in the dissolution of most of the urban and rural guilds that had been founded for religious purposes (often called *confraternities*). Still, some Norwegian craft guilds and the Hanseatic merchant guild in Bergen, which in addition to their religious and social functions also had occupational and economic functions, continued to exist after the Reformation.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the Reformation marked a change, both when it came to the number of guilds, their functions, and their importance in society as a whole. However, expressions of continuity between the medieval and the early modern period could be found. This continuity is first and foremost reflected in the guilds that survived the Reformation, but, and this is perhaps more surprising, it is also reflected in the arrangements for helping living and deceased members. Central to the medieval guild was mutual aid. The extent of this varied from guild to guild, but it was customary to help sick, poor and deceased members. Similar provisions are also found in preserved craft guild statutes from early modern Norway.

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11 Oexle 1985; Oexle 1998. For more on ritual kinship in guilds, see Terpstra (ed.) 2000.

12 Bisgaard 2001, 83–103; Haugland 2012, 145–178.

13 Oexle 1998; Anz 1998, 13–15; Bisgaard 2001; Haugland 2012.

14 For more on the guilds and the Reformation in England, see Crouch 2000; Duffy 2005; in Germany, see Gierke 2002 (1868); in the Benelux, see Prak *et al.* 2006; in the Nordic Countries, see Christensen 1931; Bisgaard 2001; Haugland 2012.

The scope of this paper is to examine the guilds' help for the deceased. What help could the guilds of late medieval and early modern Norway provide for their deceased members? How did the Danish-Norwegian Reformation of 1536 change the extent of this help? Were the guilds what the French historian Philippe Ariès has called institutions of death?<sup>15</sup> The paper argues that helping deceased members was essential not only to the guilds of late medieval Norway, but also to the craft guilds founded after the Reformation,<sup>16</sup> thus stressing a greater degree of continuity between the medieval guilds and the post-Reformation craft guilds than previous research has done. In Norwegian research, and in North European research on guilds in general, it was long held that the craft guilds were solely the economic and political bodies representing groups of craftsmen in the medieval and early modern towns, with few or no social and religious functions.<sup>17</sup> While more recent studies, particularly over the last three decades, has shown that this no longer could be considered to be true when it comes to the late medieval craft guilds,<sup>18</sup> it is still a widely held view about the early modern craft guilds in Norwegian research.

Furthermore, the paper argues for a basic continuity in the forms such help to the deceased might take, although the main focus of their help shifted from the late medieval focus on prayers and masses for the soul in purgatory to a focus on giving the deceased an honourable funeral.

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15 Ariès 1991, 184–189.

16 Merchant guilds are, except for the Hanseatic merchant guild in Bergen, not known from early modern Norwegian towns.

17 See discussion in Haugland 2012, 32–38; also Blom 1960, 308–313; Ljung 1960, 302–305; Jacobsen 1980; Lindström 1991; Anz 1998; Bisgaard 2001; Black 2007.

18 Jacobsen 1980; Anz 1998; Bisgaard 2001; Haugland 2012.





Picture 1. Willem Vrelant: *Mass for the Dead*, early 1460s.

Guild statutes are the main source for the help guilds provided to deceased guild members. Few such statutes have survived from medieval Norway. Only nine medieval guild statutes exist today. Three of them belonged to guilds in the countryside: *Trøndelagsskråen*, dated to the second half of the thirteenth century, belonged to a guild in the district in Trøndelag;<sup>19</sup> *Gulatingsskråen*, also dated to the second half of the thirteenth century, belonged to a guild in *Sunnhordland*, in the

<sup>19</sup> *Trøndelagsskråen* was first published by Gustav Storm in 1896, Storm 1896, 217–225. For more on the dating of the statutes, see Haugland 2012, 52–61.

south of the county of Hordaland in Western Norway,<sup>20</sup> while *Onarheimsskråen*, dated 1394, belonged to St. Olaf's guild at Onarheim in Sunnhordland.<sup>21</sup> The remaining six sets of statutes are from urban guilds, of which four were situated in Bergen: the 1412 statutes of the German shoemakers' guild;<sup>22</sup> the statutes of the Hanseatic merchant guild or *Cunthor*;<sup>23</sup> the statutes of the St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild, which consisted solely of Hanseatic merchants at the Cunthor, dated to the first half of the fifteenth century;<sup>24</sup> and the 1529 statutes of the *skytningr* or guild of Jacobsfjorden and Bellgården, each being a row of houses that went from the docks by *Vågen* up to the *Øvrestræti*, a guild consisting of the people living in the two rows of houses.<sup>25</sup> A few more statutes have survived from craft guilds in the early modern period. From the Reformation to the craft guild reforms in Denmark-Norway in the 1680s and 1690s, when all existing guild statutes were annulled and new statutes given to all craft guilds within 41 different crafts in the Danish and Norwegian towns, 21 statutes from Norwegian craft guilds are preserved.<sup>26</sup>

20 *Gulatingsskråen* was first published in *Norges gamle Love*, *NgL*, 1 R, V, 7–11. According to the German legal historian Max Pappenheim, the statutes belonged to a guild in the town of Bergen, but this has later been rejected by Gustav Storm, who concluded that the statutes must have belonged to a guild in Sunnhordland, a thesis that is widely accepted today. Oscar A. Johnsen has suggested that the statutes are an older version of *Onarheimsskråen* from 1394, but this thesis has not won support from other scholars; Pappenheim 1888, 36, 56; Johnsen 1920, 8; Blom 1984, 6.

21 *Onarheimsskråen* is published in *Norges gamle Love*, *NgL*, 1 R, V, 11–13.

22 *NgL*, 2 R, 1, no. 376.

23 The statutes, often called the *Statuta Vetera* (the old statutes), are dated to the beginning of the sixteenth century (*NgL*, 2 R, 2, no. 416. For more on the dating of the statutes, see Haugland 2012, 112, footnote 4). Statutes also exist from the two Hanseatic merchant guilds in Oslo and Tønsberg. The Hanseatic merchant guild in Oslo received sets of statutes from the town council of Rostock in 1378, 1420 and 1472 (*NgL*, 2, 1, no. 352 [1378]; 2, no. 424 [1472]). In addition, the two guilds in Oslo and Tønsberg received a common set of statutes from the town council in Rostock in 1452 (*NgL*, 2, 2, no. 403; also Haugland 2012, 110–111, 292–295).

24 The statutes were found and first published by Yngvar Nielsen in 1878 (Nielsen 1878, 4–10), and later in *Norges gamle Love* (*NgL*, 2, 1, no. 342) and *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (DN XVI, no. 39).

25 Jacobsfjorden and Bellgården were each called a *garð*. In Bergen, a *garð* consisted of one or two rows of houses that went from the docks. There were several households in each *garð*. Each household had their own storage rooms, living rooms and bedrooms in the *garð*, as well as shares in the dock in front of the *garð*, the *eldhus* and the *skytningsstofa*, which all the households in *garð* the owned in common. There were over 30 such *garðs* at Bryggen in the late medieval period. By the middle of the fifteenth century, most of them were owned by German merchants. The Germans probably adapted the way the *garðs* were organized before the Germans became dominant at Bryggen. For instance, they kept the *skytningsstova*, which they called *schutstaven*, as an assembly hall where the members of the *garð* met regularly for social and religious gatherings, and kept dividing each *garð* into several households. Each of these *garðs* were organized as guilds, led by the leaders of each of the households in the *garð*, and with their own statutes, called *Gartenrechts*. The oldest *Gartenrecht* is the one from Jacobsfjorden and Bellgården, dated 1529, but copied from an older one. The *Gartenrecht* in Jacobsfjorden and Bellgården was published with a translation in *Bergen Historiske Forenings Skrifter* in 1895 (BHFS 1, 13–67). For more, see Helle 1982, 220–246, 738–742; Haugland 2012, 116–118.

26 Grevenor 1924, 120–140; Kjellberg and Stigum 1936, 339–344.

Of these, eleven were from craft guilds in Bergen, six from Oslo and two from Kristiansand and Trondheim respectively.<sup>27</sup>

The focus on preserved guild statutes does of course mean that the discussion will mainly concern what help the guilds wanted to provide for their members, rather than what help they in fact did provide. This is because the main sources, and particularly when it comes to the Middle Ages often the only sources for the help guilds could provide its deceased members are the guild statutes. However, from the second half of the seventeenth century, the preserved statutes are to an increasing extent supported by guild records, accounts and other sources that makes it possible to see what help the guilds in fact did provide.

The discussion will mainly focus on the late Middle Ages and the period between the Reformation in 1536 and the Danish-Norwegian craft guild reforms in the 1680s.<sup>28</sup> For the medieval period, the paper will discuss the funeral arrangements in both urban guilds and guilds in the countryside. For the early modern period, the discussion will be limited to the towns, since few, if any guilds in the countryside survived the Reformation. In addition, the discussion will mainly focus on Bergen, the largest Norwegian town in the late medieval and most of the early modern period.

## **Intercession for the Dead: Guilds and the Late Medieval Culture of Death**

Whenever a member of a medieval guild died, the other members were obligated to attend his or her funeral. The obligation comprised the whole of the funeral ritual. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the statutes from St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild in Bergen. Whenever a member died, the masters of the guild, which were called *schaffers*, would send out a message to the other members informing them of the coming funeral and instructing them to gather in the house of the deceased the evening before the funeral. There, in the presence of all the members, the deceased was laid on a bier and swathed in a cloth while a vicar recited prayers and gave him extreme unction. The ritual would continue during the night with vigils and a wake. From the statutes, it is difficult to determine whether

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27 In Bergen, statutes are preserved for the goldsmiths' guild (1568), the bakers' guild (1597/1607, 1626, 1648), the barbers' guild (1597 and 1672), the tailors' guild (1605), the smiths' guild (1625), the shoemakers' guild (1635), the baker apprentices' guild (1641) and the coppersmiths' guild (1671). In Oslo, statutes are preserved for the tailors' guild (1607 and 1636), the smiths' guild (1671), the shoemakers' guild (1671) and the goldsmiths (1671–1673), in Kristiansand for the tailors' guild (1652 and 1658), and in Trondheim for the carpenters' guild (1657) and the shoemakers' guild (1662). See Kjellberg 1936, 64–65; Lindström 1991.

28 Grevenor 1924, 69–89; Kjellberg & Stigum 1936, 175–189.



all the members were to watch over the deceased, or if some of the members were elected to do so.<sup>29</sup>

The burial ritual continued the next morning with a funeral procession from the house of the deceased to the church where the burial of the deceased was to take place. The St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild statutes describe a procession in which the bier with the deceased, which was carried by a number of members, was flanked by other members holding the finest of the guild's two canopies over the bier and twelve members carrying elevated processional torches.<sup>30</sup> The statutes do not reveal where burials of deceased members would take place. It is possible that they were at one of the two chantries the guild owned, either the St. Catherine chantry in the Franciscan convent church or the St. Dorothy chantry in the Dominican convent church, but it is also possible that they would take place in St. Mary's or St. Martin's, the two parish churches the guild members belonged to.<sup>31</sup>

When the procession had entered the church, the bier and the torches were placed on the church floor so that the torches still flanked the bier. The requiem mass followed, in which the soul of the deceased was commended to God. This was also to be held if a member had died abroad and no bier with the deceased could be carried to the church, since attendance at the mass was still obligatory, as if the member had died in the town.<sup>32</sup> The requiem mass was to be followed by a small sermon by the guild vicar, before the vicar swung the censer over the deceased, sprinkled him with holy water, and read the relief prayer for the soul of the deceased.<sup>33</sup> Then a second procession followed, in which the members followed the bier with the deceased from the church to the grave. There the deceased was buried, accompanied by the reading of the benediction for the deceased, the singing of psalms and more prayers might be offered for the soul of the deceased.<sup>34</sup>

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29 Both kinds of arrangements are known from guilds in Danish and Swedish towns, Haugland 2012, 234–235.

30 *DN XVI*, no. 39, 35–36.

31 Helle 1982, 749–750; Haugland 2012, 224, 234–235.

32 *DN XVI*, no. 39, 35.

33 Johansson 1956, 415–417.

34 Johansson 1956, 415–416.



Picture 2. This deathbed scene (below) from the 1420s shows an angel and a devil fighting over the soul of the dying man, while a corpse is being buried in the central image.

In the rural guilds, whose members often came from different parishes or districts, it was probably more difficult to gather the whole guild when a member had died. The obligation to attend the funeral of a deceased member was therefore limited to members living in the same neighbourhood, parish or district as the deceased. For instance, if a member of St. Olav's guild at Onarheim had died, then those members that lived in the same parish as the deceased had to follow him or her to the grave and hear a mass for his or her soul. Those who did not were fined.<sup>35</sup>

The funerals were financed in different ways. St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild in Bergen financed them through a fee the members paid each time a member

<sup>35</sup> *NgL*, 1 R, V, 12, art. 21. A similar provision is found in *Gulatingsskræen*, which states that if a member had died, his heir would cut a fiery cross and send it to the other guild members. Those who received the fiery cross, either had to attend the funeral, read a mass for his deceased soul or give a sum of money to the guild's funeral fund. Those who had not received the fiery cross were excepted from these duties (*NgL*, 1 R, V, 10, art. 34).

had died.<sup>36</sup> In other guilds, funerals were financed through the incomes from entrance fees, membership fees and fines. This appears to have been the case in St. Olav's guild at Onarheim, although the statutes do not mention it explicitly. In fact, they do not mention how it would finance funerals at all, confining themselves to declaring that the guild should provide for and finance deceased members' funerals. However, the only fees mentioned in the statutes are the entrance fee and the membership fee, and these, together with the fines mentioned for violations of the statutes, probably financed the funerals.<sup>37</sup>

From the surviving statutes, it is evident that the guilds could provide for and finance the funerals for their deceased members. It was usually the family of the deceased that was expected to pay for the funeral costs whenever one of the family members died. That the guilds here filled a function usually exercised by the family shows how the ritual kinship of a guild created bonds of solidarity and community similar to that in families, and could expand or even replace the social safety net of the family that came to one's support when at the deathbed. This was particularly important in the towns, where many of the town dwellers, such as the German merchants and craftsmen in Bergen, did not have their own family as a social safety net, and thus did not have a family to provide for and finance funeral and masses for their souls if they died. The provisions stating that attendance at the funerals of members were obligatory shows how important the guilds considered this collective support for their members in death.

However, it also shows how guild funerals also had a public or communal aspect. The funerals were occasions at which the collective identity and wealth of a guild was put on display. It was therefore important that the guild show its best side at the funerals. This could be seen, for instance, in the statutes of St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild, which stress that the best canopy and twelve large torches were to be used in funerals.<sup>38</sup> Large torches were expensive, and four torches were considered as a minimum. Thus, St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild could afford to use twelve large torches in funerals shows clearly how the wealth of the guild was displayed in guild's funeral processions.<sup>39</sup>

The guilds' help for deceased members did not end with the funeral, but continued after it with masses for the release of the soul of the deceased from purgatory.<sup>40</sup> This was possible either by founding a chantry or by taking over an already existing chantry in a church or a monastery. A chantry consisted of a side altar in a church or a monastery and a landed property large enough to cover

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36 DN XVI, no. 39, 35. A funeral fee is also mentioned in *Gulatingsskråen*, but here the fee appears to be limited to those who lived in the same parish as the deceased (*NgL*, 1 R, V, 10, art. 34).

37 *NgL*, 1 R, V, 11–13.

38 DN XVI, no. 39.

39 For more on the use of torches in the medieval funeral ritual and for their use in the guilds, see Duffy 2005, 142–141; Bisgaard 2001, 63, 78–83.

40 The section is based on Bisgaard 2001, 105–147; Haugland 2012, 201–208.

the costs of having a priest singing masses. The priest was responsible for the maintenance of the side altar, but could also, if agreed upon between the guild that founded the chantry and the priest, sing masses for the souls of guild members and for others that benefited the guild or the guild chantry in their wills. Thus, the founding of a chantry made it possible for the guilds to provide help for the souls of the deceased members as well as the souls of any non-members that had left a bequest to the guild or its chantry. In fact, the Church from time to time called upon non-members to endow guild chantries, usually by promising indulgence for those who gave gifts to particular guilds or their chantries.<sup>41</sup>

There is evidence for guild chantries in the towns of Bergen, Marstrand, Nidaros, Oslo and Tønsberg in the late medieval period. A majority of the known guild chantries were situated in Bergen, which had ten known guild chantries.<sup>42</sup> Guild chantries were founded by rural guilds as well. In the statutes of *Gulatingsskråen*, *Trøndelagsskråen* and *Onarheimsskråen*, the guild chantries are implicitly mentioned in provisions mentioning guild vicars and masses for the deceased.<sup>43</sup>

As we have seen, it was customary to sing one or more masses for the deceased on the funeral day. Furthermore, masses for the deceased seven days and thirty days after the funeral were also customary, as well as on All Souls' Day and on the anniversary of the funeral. Such annual masses for the deceased are also mentioned in the guild statutes, but here it does not seem to have been normal to sing masses for the deceased on the anniversary of the funeral of each deceased member, but to have one or more annual masses for *all* deceased members. Whenever a member died, his or her name would be written down on a list or in book kept by the guild or the guild vicar. Such a list or a book is mentioned in the will of the Hanseatic merchant and *Bergenfahrer* Hinrik Kemenade from 1452. According to the will, Kemenade endowed the Corpus Christi guild in Bergen so that the guild would sing masses for his soul and have his name be written down in the guild's *denkelbuch*.<sup>44</sup>

The names on the list would then be read and masses for their souls sung one or several times a year. The reason for this way of arranging the anniversary

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41 Letters of indulgence are preserved for St. Anne's guild in Bergen (DN I, no. 1040 [1514]), the Corpus Christi guild in Marstrand (*Erkebiskop Henrik Kalteisens Kopibog*, 208 [1453]), the Corpus Christi guild in Oslo (DN II, no. 726 [1437]), and St. Nicholas's guild in Øystese (DN VIII, no. 410 [1482]).

42 For more on guild chantries in Bergen and Oslo, see Haugland 2012, 221–229. In Tønsberg, the St. Anne's guild had a chantry in the Franciscan convent church (DN IV, no. 409), while the town's St. Olaf's guild probably had a chantry in Lavranskirken, Johnsen 1929, 252. The Corpus Christi guild in Marstrand had a chantry in the Franciscan convent church, mentioned in 1453 (*Erkebiskop Henrik Kalteisens Kopibog*, 208). The existence of guild chantries in Nidaros is more directly mentioned, in two letters dated 1293 that mention guild vicars, which again implies the existence of guild chantries; DN III, nos. 34 and 35. There is also a possible reference to a guild chantry in Stavanger, mentioned in the will of Bishop Alf Thorgardssøn from 1478; DN IV, no. 987; Haugland 2012, 87, footnote 4.

43 NgL, 1 R, V, 7–11 (*Gulatingsskråen*), 11–13 (*Onarheimsskråen*); Storm 1896, 218–220 (*Trøndelagsskråen*). The same is implied in a letter mentioning help to the soul of the deceased in St. Nicholas's guild at Voss. The letter was published by Alexander Bugge (1917, 231–232).

44 Bruns 1900, 91, footnote 2.



masses for the dead was probably that it enabled all the living members to attend when the names of the deceased members were read and masses sung for their souls. That all the living members attended these masses was of great importance to the guilds; in fact, attendance was obligatory for all the guild members. The medieval guilds, like the medieval Christian community at large, were believed to consist of both the living and the deceased. This relationship, as we have seen, was summed up in the medieval funeral ritual, where the body of the deceased was brought to rest in a consecrated churchyard at the centre of a village or a town while the clergy offered prayers and masses for the soul of the deceased.<sup>45</sup> When the guild statutes insisted on the living members being present when the masses for the deceased were sung, it was because these masses were gatherings of the whole guild, celebrations of the community of the guild, both living and deceased.

For the same reasons, the masses for the deceased were usually a part of a larger guild gathering, such as the celebration of the guild's patron saint(s) or the guild's annual social gathering. The members of the St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild in Bergen were to meet for four annual masses for the deceased: the first one at the St. Catherine chantry in the Franciscan convent church on the second day of the feast of St. Catherine (25 November), the second at the St. Dorothy chantry in the Dominican convent church on the second day of the feast of St. Dorothy (6 February), the third at the St. Catherine chantry in the evening of the feast of St. George (23 April), and the fourth, again at the St. Dorothy chantry, during the *gildedrikk*, the annual social guild gathering. Attendance at the readings was obligatory. However, exceptions could be made for those that were unable to attend because they were abroad at the time.<sup>46</sup>

It has to be noted, however, that at least two of the guild's readings were held in the winter, outside the sailing season, thus ensuring that most if not all the members were in the town when the readings were held. In rural guilds, it appears to have been usual to have an annual reading of masses for all deceased members during the *gildedrikk*. For instance, in St. Olaf's guild at Onarheim, which held its *gildedrikk* at the feast of St. Olaf, the guild vicar was to sing masses for the deceased in the church each evening during the *gildedrikk*. Furthermore, each evening the names of all deceased members would be read out in the guild hall and masses for their souls would be sung. On the last day of the *gildedrikk*, masses would be sung for all Christian souls and for all members that were alive, again marking the guild as a community of the living and the dead, where the living interceded for the souls of the deceased.<sup>47</sup>

The guilds could also make agreements with monastic orders in order to ensure the singing of masses for deceased members. In 1409, the shoemakers' guild in

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45 Koslofsky 2005, 2.

46 DN XVI, no. 39.

47 NgL, 1 R, V, 11–13. Daily readings of masses for the deceased is also mentioned in *Trøndelagsskråen* (Storm 1896, 219) and *Gulatingsskråen* (NgL, 1 R, V, 10).

Oslo made such an agreement with the Dominican order of the province of Dacia. According to the agreement, whenever a member of the guild died, the guild would notify the provincial chapter, so that all the Dominicans in the province could sing masses for the soul of the deceased shoemaker. In return, the guild would annually collect an amount of money to give the order, probably for the convent in Oslo.<sup>48</sup>

The masses for the deceased were financed in various ways. They could be financed through gifts given by the members each time the members met to read masses for the deceased, as mentioned in *Trøndelagsskråen* and *Gulatingsskråen*,<sup>49</sup> through an annual fee on all the members, in *Onarheimsskråen* called *saala skoth*,<sup>50</sup> or through an obligation on all members to bequeath the guild an amount of money in their wills. Such an obligation is for instance known through the statutes of St. Catherine and St. Dorothy's guild. According to the statutes, all members had to bequeath the guild three *Lubecker* marks when writing their wills. If a member could not afford to make such a bequest, the guild would still read masses for his deceased soul. In such cases, the friends of the deceased should pay the three marks instead, or, if the friends were unable to pay, the reading of masses for his soul would be financed by the guild.<sup>51</sup>

The surviving guild statutes from medieval Norway, both the towns and the countryside, show how the guild was present beside the deceased member at all stages of the funeral ritual, helping the dying through his last hours, as well as on his way to the grave and in purgatory. The members watched over the dying guild brother in his last hours and between his death and the day of his funeral, arranged a funeral ale drinking in his honour and the funeral procession to his grave, followed him to grave, carried the bier with the deceased, prayed for his soul, covered the funeral costs and, after the funeral, the guild ensured that annual masses would be sung for the release of the deceased's soul from purgatory in the presence of all the living members. Thus, the statutes show how the Norwegian guilds were a part of the late medieval, Catholic culture of death, marked first and foremost by the doctrine of purgatory and the belief that the living could intercede for souls in purgatory through prayers, masses for the dead and letters of indulgence. Still, the guilds were not what the French historian Philippe Ariès called institutions of death.<sup>52</sup> While it is true that the service of the dead was one of the main purposes of the medieval guilds, and some urban guilds were even founded mainly for the purpose of giving poor people or strangers a proper burial,<sup>53</sup> the service of the dead

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48 *DN* VII, no. 350. The shoemakers made a similar arrangement with the Franciscans in 1407; *NgL*, 2 R, 1, no. 201.

49 Storm 1896, 219 (*Trøndelagsskråen*); *NgL*, 1 R, V, 10 (*Gulatingsskråen*).

50 *NgL*, 1 R, V, 11. St. Michael's guild at Voss appears to have had a similar arrangement; Bugge 1917, 232.

51 *DN* XVI, no. 39.

52 Ariès 1991, 184–189.

53 Bisgaard 2001.

was not the only purpose for founding a guild, and was never the sole purpose of a guild, as Ariès had suggested. As pointed out by Miri Rubin, Gervase Rosser, Susan Reynolds and Lars Bisgaard among others, as well as myself, the late medieval guilds usually filled a whole range of purposes, both socially, religiously, economically, judicially and politically, of which the service for the dead was one.<sup>54</sup>

### **The Honourable Funeral: The Early Modern Craft Guilds and the Lutheran Culture of Death**

The Reformation was introduced to Denmark-Norway in 1536, and a church ordinance for both countries came the following year. The church ordinance laid the foundation for the new Protestant church, declaring that the Danish-Norwegian king was the head of both state and church, that all Church property previously owned by the Catholic Church now belonged to the king, and contained provisions concerning the reorganisation of the church, the redistribution of the newly confiscated Church property, prohibitions on Catholic practises and expressions of Catholic belief, such as the cult of saints, vigils and masses for the dead, and provisions concerning the new, Protestant liturgy for the mass, the ordination of priests, weddings and funerals. The church ordinance also had a whole section on the guilds. According to the ordinance, incomes from guild chantries should no longer go to the guilds that owned the chantries. Instead, the incomes should be for the foundation of poor relief funds in the towns.<sup>55</sup> However, in 1540, King Christian III (r. 1534–1559) had already issued another decree concerning the guild chantries in the Danish towns, according to which, the incomes from these chantries were to go schoolmasters and teachers at the cathedral schools in the towns.<sup>56</sup>

The church ordinance was first and foremost written with the Danish provinces in mind, and the decree of 1540 only concerned the Danish towns. However, the fate of guild chantries in Norway did not differ greatly from that of the guild chantries in Denmark: They were confiscated, and their incomes were redistributed for other ends. In Bergen, a prohibition on guilds was issued at the *bylagting* in 1544. It was also decided that the incomes from guild chantries in the town should partly be distributed to poor relief funds, and partly to finance restoration of the Cathedral.<sup>57</sup> In Oslo, the incomes from the chantries belonging to St. Anne's guild and the Corpus Christi guild had been redistributed to two clerks at the royal castle of Akershus by 1541.<sup>58</sup> Possible conflicts connected to the confiscation and redistribution of guild

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54 Rubin 1993; Rosser 2006; Reynolds 2007; Bisgaard 2001; Haugland 2012.

55 *Kirkeordinansen av 1537*, V, 99–100.

56 Christensen 1931, 271–272, 278.

57 Bang 1895, 34–35; Haugland 2006, 91–93.

58 Haugland 2012, 378–379.

chantries is only found in Tønsberg. The incomes from St. Anne's guild's chantry first fell to the king in 1575, indicating that there had been conflict over the royal confiscation of the chantry and its property.<sup>59</sup>

We know less about the fate of the guild chantries in the countryside. In the diocese of Bergen, the royal captain at the town castle, Christoffer Huitfeldt (1501–1559), and the newly appointed Lutheran bishop Geble Pedersøn (ca. 1490–1557) issued a prohibition on guilds in 1542. In addition, they decided that all guild halls in the bishopric, their inventories as well as other possessions belonging to the guilds were to be confiscated and sold, and that the incomes from the sale should go partly to poor relief in the countryside, partly to the leper hospital and the Cathedral in Bergen, and partly to the parish churches in the bishopric.<sup>60</sup> The prohibition does not however mention guild chantries, but it is likely that they, like other properties owned by the guilds, were confiscated and redistributed for different purposes, as they were in the town of Bergen. In 1552, a prohibition referring to and repeating the content of the one from Bergen dated 1542 was issued in the diocese of Trondheim, stating that guild halls and other possessions belonging to guilds in the bishopric, which probably included the guild chantries, were to be confiscated and sold, and their incomes redistributed.<sup>61</sup> Prohibitions against guilds are not known from the other Norwegian bishoprics, but we can assume that similar prohibitions were issued there as well.

Few urban guilds and no rural guilds are mentioned in post-Reformation sources. Thus, it is likely that church ordinance from 1537 and the decrees issued in the 1540s and 1550s ordering the confiscation of guild chantries and guild halls, thus taking away the religious and social meeting places from the guilds, ultimately led to the dissolution of most Norwegian guilds. However, some urban guilds did survive the Reformation. In Bergen, at least seven of the German craft guilds as well as the Hanseatic merchant guild continued to exist. The Hanseatic merchant guild existed up to the 1760s, while the German craft guilds were dissolved in 1559, after a long conflict with the king and his representatives in the town.<sup>62</sup> However, shortly after the dissolution of the German craft guilds, new craft guilds were

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<sup>59</sup> *ARR*, 6, no. 89.

<sup>60</sup> Kolsrud 2007, 212–213.

<sup>61</sup> *DN* XII, no. 636.

<sup>62</sup> Fossen 1979, 52–69, 679–689.



founded,<sup>63</sup> often by and mainly consisting of German craftsmen, thus showing a strong element of continuity with the town's late medieval guilds.<sup>64</sup>

The development in the other Norwegian towns in the second half of the sixteenth century does seem to be that of discontinuity, although the sources are too few and fragmented to make any certain conclusions. Shoemakers' guilds are known from Oslo, Trondheim and Tønsberg in the late medieval period,<sup>65</sup> but none of them are mentioned after the Reformation, and no new craft guilds are mentioned in the three towns before the turn of the seventeenth century.<sup>66</sup> During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, craft guilds were founded in other towns as well.<sup>67</sup> Altogether, 83 different craft guilds are known to have existed in Norwegian towns between the Reformation and the dissolution of all craft guilds in 1869.<sup>68</sup>

All the craft guilds that survived the Reformation as well as the craft guilds that were founded in the late 1500s and during the seventeenth century, insisted, like their late medieval counterparts, on helping deceased members. However, as the Reformation had abolished purgatory and prohibited extreme unction and masses for the dead, making it no longer possible nor necessary to intercede for the dead, their help for deceased members was redefined from intercession for the deceased members to the funeral and in particular the funeral procession. This shift of focus is evident in the craft guild statutes from the second half of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, which concentrate solely on matters related to the funeral,

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63 A goldsmiths' guild was founded in 1567, and in 1571, a new tailors' guild is mentioned for the first time. Furthermore, a barbers' guild and a bakers' guild are both mentioned in 1597, while a shoemakers' guild is mentioned in 1602, a coopers' guild in 1604, a brewers' guild in 1608 and a cutters' guild in 1614. Statutes for four of those guilds still exist: the 1568 statutes of the goldsmiths' guild (*DN XV*, no. 729), the 1597 statutes of the bakers' guild (*NRR IV*, 203–207), the 1597 statutes of the barbers' guild (Sollied 1931, 11–15) and the 1605 statutes of the tailors' guild (*NRR IV*, 111–116). The other four guilds are also said to have had statutes, but these no longer exist (*NRR IV*, 70 (the carpenters); 185 (the shoemakers) and 252 (the brewers); Lindström 1991, 248 (the cutters).

64 For instance, most founders of the new goldsmith's guild in 1568 were German goldsmiths. Furthermore, a copy of their statutes dated 1596, which used to hang on a wall in the guild hall, is written in German (Bøgh 1893, 15–19), while their record book was written in German from 1568 to 1690 (Grevenor 1924, 216). Other examples are the surviving seal from the bakers' guild dated 1598, and from the shoemakers' guild dated 1602, both with inscriptions in German (Grevenor 1924, 146, 166).

65 The shoemakers' guild in Oslo is first mentioned in 1304 (*DN II*, no. 74), the shoemakers' guild in Tønsberg in 1395 (*DN IV*, no. 649), while the shoemakers' guild in Trondheim is mentioned in 1370 (*NgL*, 2 R, 1, no. 99).

66 In Oslo, a shoemakers' guild is mentioned in 1600, a goldsmiths' guild in 1604 and a tailors' guild in 1607 (Kjellberg & Stigum 1936, 40; Lindström 1991, 76). In Trondheim, the first post-Reformation craft guild to be mentioned is the bakers' guild, first mentioned as late as 1633, Kjellberg & Stigum 1936, 64. In Tønsberg, craft guilds are not mentioned at all in the early modern period.

67 Craft guilds were founded in Bragernes, Kongelv, Kristiansand, Skien, Stavanger and Strømsø in the seventeenth century, and in Arendal and Fredrikshald in the eighteenth century; Grevenor 1924; Kjellberg & Stigum 1936.

68 Grevenor 1924; Kjellberg & Stigum 1936; Fossen 1979. Their numbers could have been even higher. According to Stigum, there were apprentices' guilds in all the crafts that had a master's guild. Since there are known 62 master craft guilds, but only 21 apprentices' guilds, the total number of craft guilds in early modern Norway could be well over a hundred (Kjellberg & Stigum 1936, 201). Not all the craft guilds existed until the dissolution of all craft guilds in 1869. According to a registration of existing craft guilds in Norway in 1839, there were 45 craft guilds that year; Grevenor 1924, 136–140.

including obligatory attendance at the funeral and the funeral procession, how to select members to carry the bier with the deceased, and how to finance a members' funeral. To help the deceased meant to follow him to the grave, and the members' obligations to the deceased ended when the graveside ceremony had ended. This is clear in the 1607 statutes from the tailors' guild in Oslo stating that the members were obliged to "follow and to help the deceased in his funeral and to his grave".<sup>69</sup>

The 1636 revision of the statutes is slightly more detailed, stating that it was the responsibility of the alderman to gather the members when a member had died, and to choose which members were to carry the bier with the deceased in the funeral procession.<sup>70</sup> Similar provisions are also found in the statutes from Bergen. For instance, according to the 1597 statutes from the barbers' guild, all members had to attend when a master or an apprentice in the guild had died. Those who did not attend were fined.<sup>71</sup> The 1605 statutes from the tailors' guild states that if a member died, all members were to attend his funeral, and the youngest master tailors were to carry the bier with the deceased. Those who did not attend, and those who left the church before the deposition was over, were fined.<sup>72</sup>

The guild members' obligation to attend at funerals also included the funerals of wives, servants, children and others that belonged to the households of the masters,<sup>73</sup> which shows how the members of the masters' households were included in the solidarity of the craft guild to which the master belonged. The 1568 statutes from the goldsmiths in Bergen stated that "if any of our guild brothers or sisters, apprentices, servants or children dies, then those who do not follow the deceased to his or her grave, shall pay a fine of eight shilling."<sup>74</sup> The 1635 statutes from the shoemakers in Bergen stated that if any of their craftsmen, their wives, children or others in their households died, then all the guild brothers were obliged to attend the funeral. Only sick members were excused from attending. Those who did not attend, or left the funeral before the graveside ceremony was over, were fined. It was the responsibility of the youngest master to notify and gather the members when a member or someone in the member's household had died.<sup>75</sup>

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69 NRR IV, 177, art. 26: "[...] at følge og hjelpe den afgangne ærligen til sin Begravelse og Leiersted."

70 Those who were chosen, but refused to do so, were fined. Sick and old members were excepted from carrying the bier; Grevenor 1924, 251, art. 35 and 36.

71 Madsen & Sollied 1931, 15, art. 14. A similar provision is found in a revision of the statutes from 1672; Carøe 1921, 20.

72 NRR IV, 114, art. 9.

73 See the 1568 statutes from the goldsmith's guild in Bergen (DN XV, no. 729), the 1625 statutes from the smiths' guild in Bergen (Deichman, fol. no. 13, art. 21), the 1626 and 1648 statutes from the baker's guild in Bergen (Deichman, fol. no. 13, art. 10–11; NRR IX, 56, art. 14), the 1635 statutes from the shoemakers' guild in Bergen (NRR VII, 114, art. 12), and the 1636 statutes from the tailors' guild in Oslo (Grevenor 1924, 241, art. 35).

74 DN XV, no. 729: "*Bliffuer och nogenn aff wore Embitzbrødere eller Søstere, suenne, drennge eller Barnn dødt, huilcken ther ick da følger thenn døde tiill sin leigerstædt, schall haffue forbrott ottehe skellinge*". My translation.

75 NRR VII, 114, art. 12.

The importance of obligatory attendance at the funeral procession was connected to the importance of giving deceased guild members a *Hederlig Jordeferd*, an honourable funeral, an expression made explicit in several of the guild statutes.<sup>76</sup> A large procession, of which the members would make up a significant part, from the house of the deceased to the grave, would make up what was considered an important part of an honourable funeral; thus, it was considered important that all the members take part in the procession. In addition, to attend another's funeral was considered to be an act of good Lutheran charity, or as the Norwegian Church ordinance from 1607 puts it, the last good deed or favour one Christian could give to another.<sup>77</sup>

The guild statutes' emphasis on the honourable funeral was much in accordance with the notions of Martin Luther and the other leading reformers, as well as with the new Lutheran funeral ritual, as described in the Danish-Norwegian church ordinance from 1537 and the Norwegian church ordinance from 1607. Luther justified the display of secular honour in funerals by linking it to the promise of resurrection as a consequence of salvation by faith:

For it is meet and right that we should conduct these funerals with proper decorum in order to honour and praise that joyous article of our faith, namely, the resurrection of the dead, and in order to defy Death, that terrible foe who so shamefully and in so many horrible ways goes on to devour us. [...] Here also belong the traditional Christian burial rites, such as that the bodies are carried in state, beautifully decked, and sung over, and that tombstones adorn their graves. All this is done so that the article of the resurrection may be firmly implanted in us.<sup>78</sup>

The same understanding of the Lutheran funeral is found in the church ordinances from 1537 and 1607, which laid the foundation of a new Lutheran culture of death in Denmark and Norway.<sup>79</sup> Whenever someone died, it was, according to these ordinances, the duty of his or her friends or family to prepare for an honourable funeral, and to notify the priest, the parish clerk, the sexton and the schoolmaster so that they all could make the necessary preparations for the funeral. However, the family and friends of the deceased were not allowed to watch over the deceased between the time of his or her death and the time of the funeral, nor was it allowed to invite people to the house for a gathering or for drinking, as this

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76 The expression is found in the statutes from the bakers' guild in Bergen from 1626 and 1648 (Deichman, fol. no. 13, art. 10–11; *NRR IX*, 56, art. 14), the statutes of the smiths' guild in Bergen from 1625 (Deichman, fol. no. 13, art. 21), and the statutes from the shoemakers' guild in Bergen from 1635 (*NRR VII*, 114, art. 12).

77 *Kirkeordinansen av 1607*, 54: "*De Dødis Begræffuelse er regnit iblant Miskundelige gierninger*". The Church law of 1537 and the Norwegian Church law of 1607 both define attendance at funerals as a charitable act.

78 Cited from Koslofsky 2005, 93–94.

79 The following section is based on the chapters on funerals in the Church laws of 1537 and 1607; *Kirkeordinansen av 1537*, 72–73; *Kirkeordinansen av 1607*, 54–57. See also Fæhn 1994, 147–151; Amundsen 2005, 213–243.



was considered to be a Catholic practice. In accordance with this, the early modern craft guild statutes do not mention a wake or drinking. This does not necessarily mean that they did not arrange wakes or drinking. On the contrary, from the many prohibitions issued against such practices in the towns and countryside alike in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Norway, it is likely that the early modern craft guilds continued the medieval practices of watching over deceased members and arranging drinking in their honour.<sup>80</sup>



Picture 3. The death of Virgin Mary as depicted by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) set an example of how to stage a Good Death in the best *ars moriendi* fashion. It also demonstrates what a busy place a deathbed could be.

According to the Danish and Norwegian church ordinances, the funeral itself was to start when the church bells started tolling, but the two laws stressed that the tolling did not mark the beginning of the deceased soul's journey to purgatory,

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<sup>80</sup> Fæhn 1994, 149. The prohibitions did not seem to have any effect. The practice continued in many parts of Norway into the nineteenth century, Amundsen 2005, 178.



as it was believed to be in the late medieval Catholic funeral, but was intended to wake up the living, and to remind them of their own death and the promise of their salvation and resurrection by faith. As the church bells started tolling, in towns with a school and a school pupils' choir, the schoolmaster and the school pupils were to start walking to the house of the deceased. When they had come to the house, they would start singing psalms, thus marking the start of the funeral procession. The choir would also lead the procession with the bier with the deceased through the streets to the church or the churchyard and the grave of the deceased, accompanied by the ringing of church bells. The tolling of church bells and the participation of family, friends, neighbours, the priest, the school choir and, in the case of the craft guilds, of the deceased guild member's brethren, gave the funeral procession a public or communal character. It was the urban community's farewell to the deceased. Furthermore, it was considered an honourable procession, taking the bier with the deceased in state, beautifully decked, as Martin Luther put it, from his house to his grave.

The funeral was to end with a graveside ceremony, where the priest sprinkled earth on the bier carrying the deceased while the choir and the parish sang psalms, followed by a short sermon – here both church ordinances urged the priests to preach about penance and conversion – before all would kneel beside the grave and pray that they all might maintain their faith.<sup>81</sup>

When the graveside ceremony was over, the members had no further obligations towards the deceased. However, the craft guild statutes were also concerned, as were the medieval guild statutes, with how to ensure that all their members, including poor, sick and old members, could be given a proper funeral. In cases where a member was too poor, sick or old to pay for his or her own funeral, the craft guild would step in and finance the funeral, thus ensuring that he or she would be given just as proper a funeral as any other member.<sup>82</sup> This was financed in different ways. In the tailors' guild in Bergen, funerals were financed through a fee called *tidegjeld*, and according to its 1605 statutes, the members had to meet four times each year to pay the fee.<sup>83</sup> In the tailors' guild in Oslo, the funerals were partly financed through the entrance fee. Whenever a new member was admitted, he had to pay a fee that partly went to the alderman, partly to the clerk who had written

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81 During the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the small sermons held in the funerals of people from the top stratum of society became more and more extensive, and came to deal more with the life of the deceased, often portraying him or her as a role model of the life of a good Christian, than with penance and conversion. Koslofsky, who has looked at funeral sermons in early modern Germany, has argued that by the sixteenth century, the funeral sermon had become the most significant element of the Lutheran funeral liturgy; articulating both doctrine and honour, consolation and prestige, they had become the culmination of a ritual focused on the living and the honour that their dead brought them; Koslofsky 2005, 107–114. For more on the funeral sermons as a literary genre in early modern Norway, see Stensby 1996; Gilje and Rasmussen 2002, 183–201.

82 See the 1625 statutes of the smiths' guild in Bergen (Deichman, fol. no. 13, art. 21), the 1626 and 1648 statutes of the bakers' guild in Bergen (Deichman, fol. no. 13, art. 10–11; NRR IX, 56, art. 15), the 1635 statutes of the shoemakers' guild in Bergen (NRR VII, 114, art. 12), and the 1636 statutes of the tailors' guild in Oslo (Grevenor 1924, 241, art. 35).

83 NRR IV, 113–114, art. 8.

the name of the newcomer in the guild book, partly to the guildhall and partly to “the help and comfort of old and poor brothers and their wives and to give them a funeral when they die.”<sup>84</sup> The tailor apprentices in Oslo had their own sick and funeral fund, to which all the members paid an annual fee.<sup>85</sup>

The Lutheran funeral ceremony, as well as the craft guilds’ participation in its various stages, shows many elements of continuity with the late medieval requiem mass and the role of guilds in the late medieval funeral. In particular, the Lutheran funeral shows a basic continuity in form, with its communal procession from the home of the deceased to the church or the churchyard, led by the clergy, the funeral hymns, the funeral sermon, the tolling of church bells and burial among the Christian dead.<sup>86</sup>

The continuity is also seen in the participation of the guild in the stages of the ritual. Like their late medieval counterparts, the members of an early modern craft guild were with the deceased through all the stages of the funeral, including the funeral procession and the graveside ceremony. The guild arranged that selected guild members carried the bier with the deceased in the procession, and the guild could finance the funeral if the deceased or his relatives were too poor, sick or old to do it themselves. It is even likely that the craft guilds continued the late medieval practice of watching over deceased members and arranging drinking in their honour, although the practice was prohibited repeatedly by the Danish-Norwegian authorities during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the Lutheran funeral and the guild participation also marked a break on one vital point, the intercession for the dead. Whereas the service for the dead in the late medieval period continued after the funeral with the prayers and masses for the dead seven days and thirty days after the funeral and from then on annually on the anniversary of the death, the service for the dead in the Lutheran funeral stopped with the graveside ceremony. Thus, although showing continuity in form, the focus in the Lutheran funeral had shifted, from the dead to the living, from the intercession for the dead to the honourable funeral.

## **The Decline of the Communal Funeral and the Privatisation of the Funeral Ritual?**

In the 1680s, attempts were made by the Danish-Norwegian state to change the Lutheran funeral ritual as well as the funeral arrangements in the craft guilds in both countries. Most important was the attempt to limit the extent and the splendour of the funeral procession, thus marking the beginning of a decline in the communal funeral.

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84 Grevenor 1924, 245, art. 5: “[...] *At Komme gamle och fattige forarmede Embidts Brødre Och Deris hustruer Thill Hielp och Trøst saa och At bestedis thill Jord med naar de Wed døden Bortkalldis.*” My translation.

85 Grevenor 1924, 249, art. 23.

86 Koslofsky 2005, 94.

In 1681, a royal decree tried to limit the obligation to attend craft guild members' funerals to those who had been appointed to carry the bier with the deceased to the grave.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the decree prohibited members from meeting at other places than the house of the deceased, and then only for the funeral procession. This prohibition probably attempted to prevent that the craft guilds gathering for a wake in the house of the deceased before the funeral or in their guild halls for drinking after the funeral. The decree also prohibited the craft guilds from notifying others than the parents, children and siblings of the deceased whenever a member had died. This too marked a break with the craft guilds' funeral arrangements, which made it normal for the alderman or the youngest of the master craftsmen to notify all the members of a member's death, so that all the members could attend the wake, the funeral and the drinking for the deceased.

The decree from 1681 must be seen in connection with a general decree on funeral arrangements that came out the following year, which limited the number of people who were allowed to attend the funeral procession, and repeated the prohibitions on wakes and drinking in honour of the deceased. The decree also stated that no one except for the family of the deceased were to be notified of his or her death.<sup>88</sup> The reason for the decree was theological. The funeral processions, the decree argued, had become too large, filled with too much splendour and luxury, focusing too much on the honour of the deceased, and too little on the living, their penance and salvation. Limitations therefore had to be imposed on the number of people that took part in the procession, and the deceased should no longer be honoured with a choir of school pupils singing psalms in the procession. Instead of attending the house of the deceased, the choir now was to meet in the church where the funeral ceremony was to take place.<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, the decree of 1682 also mentions nocturnal funerals, which were only allowed after royal approval had been given.<sup>90</sup>

As Koslofsky has pointed out, by 1700 the majority of funerals in the towns and cities of Lutheran Germany took place in the evening or night. In the exclusive nocturnal funerals, he argues, the tension between Christian worship and the display of social status had shifted in favour of the latter, which opened the way for the family to replace the Christian community as the framework of the funeral in the longer term, and the funeral to become a more private family ritual.<sup>91</sup> It is uncertain how widespread nocturnal funerals became in Norwegian towns, but the possibility of funerals being held in the evening or at night, together with the limits

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87 Smith 1823, 34–40, Kjellberg & Stigum 1936, 176.

88 *Forordning om Begravelser, Hafniae die 7. November Anno 1682*, KD VII, no. 31, art. 8, 12; also Stensby 1996.

89 *Forordning om Begravelser, Hafniae die 7. November Anno 1682*, KD VII, no. 31, art. 20; also Fæhn 1994, 150.

90 *Forordning om Begravelser, Hafniae die 7. November Anno 1682*, KD VII, no. 31, art. 14.

91 Koslofsky 2005, 133–152, 159.

imposed on the funeral processions could, as in German towns, very well have been the beginning of the end of the communal funeral and the privatisation of the funeral ritual.

The royal decrees from 1681 and 1682 were followed by a number of statutes issued for all craft guilds within a single craft in Danish and Norwegian towns during the 1680s and 1690s. The limits in the decree on the obligation to attend the funerals of deceased members, is found in the 1685 statutes for the goldsmiths' guilds, for those in Bergen, Oslo and Trondheim among others. According to the statutes, "if a Master, his wife, children, apprentices, servant or servant girl die, then the alderman of the guild shall point out as many as is needed from the guild to carry the bier with the deceased to the grave".<sup>92</sup> Thus, in accordance with the 1681 and 1682 decrees, there was no general obligation for the guild members to attend the funerals of deceased members, the obligation being limited to those who were appointed to carry the bier.

We do not know whether the Danish-Norwegian state succeeded in its attempt to limit the number of guild members that attended at the funerals of deceased guild members, but considering that it no longer was obligatory to do so, it is likely that it did, thus contributing to the decline of the communal funeral. However, we do know that from the end of the seventeenth century onwards, the craft guilds were no longer alone in offering the carrying of the deceased to the grave. The 1682 decree prohibited the custom of taking payment for the carrying of the deceased, and decided that only those who had been given a licence to carry the deceased by the town council were allowed to take payment for the carrying.<sup>93</sup> It is probable that the prohibition was directed at the craft guilds, who could have offered the carrying of the deceased to non-members for payment. At least the craft guilds had had experience with carrying the deceased, and they owned the equipment needed in funerals, such as a bier and torches.<sup>94</sup>

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, and partly as a consequence of the decree from 1682, funeral clubs were founded in several Norwegian towns, the first being founded in Trondheim in the 1680s.<sup>95</sup> The funeral clubs had their own statutes, sanctioned by the town council, and were often given a monopoly on the carrying of the deceased to the grave for payment within the town. Like the craft

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92 *Guldsmed-Laugs Artikler, Hafniæ die 7. Novembr. 1685*, art. 23: "Naar nogen Mester, hans hustrue, Børn, Svend, Dreng eller Pige ved Døden afgaaer, Da skal Oldermændene lade af Lauget tilsige, saa mange som behøves, efter ordentlig Omgang at bære Liget til Jorden." Similar provisions could be found in the 1685 statutes for the button-maker's guilds (*Knapmager Laugs Artikler. Hafniæ die 7. Novembris Anno 1685*, art. 16) and the coppersmiths' statutes dated 1744 (Ryttvad 2010, 24, art. 25).

93 *Forordning om Begræffelser, Hafniae die 7. November Anno 1682, KD VII*, no. 31, art. 12.

94 Lorrance 1935, 309.

95 In Christiania, the first funeral club, *Det store kjøbmænds liig-laug*, was founded by a group of merchants in 1686, while the first funeral club in Bergen, *Studerter-Socitetet*, was founded by a group of academics in 1697. Funeral clubs were also founded in Strømsø (1713), Halden (1723), Kristiansand (1731), Arendal (1740), Bragernes (1759), Molde (1785) and Moss (1800), Lorrance 1935, 309–314. For more on the merchants' funeral club in Christiania, see Hoffstad 1931, 244–252.



guilds, the funeral clubs aimed at giving their members an honourable funeral by providing financial support for their funerals and by using the funeral equipment owned by the clubs at the funerals of their members. Many of them were probably founded by craftsmen not organized in guilds or by several small craft guilds that otherwise were unable to ensure financial support for their members' funerals or carrying them to the grave.<sup>96</sup>

The craft guilds, although their members were no longer obligated to attend deceased members' funerals after the craft guild reforms in the 1680 and 1690s, continued the late medieval practice of providing financial support for the funerals of their members'. Although no such support is mentioned in the common statutes issued for many craft guilds in the 1680s and 1690s, they all mention funds for internal poor relief. It is likely that these funds were in reality funds partly for the support of poor guild members, and partly for providing financial support for their members' funerals. Such combined funds were quite normal in the surviving guild statutes from the first half of the seventeenth century, and they are mentioned in the law from 1839, although much later, concerning crafts in Norway, which states that all craft guilds were to have their own funds for providing financial support for poor and sick members as well as for the funerals of deceased members.<sup>97</sup>

Some craft guilds even founded their own funeral clubs to ensure that their members were given financial support to their funerals. In 1690, the 24 masters of the shoemakers' guild in Bergen founded *Skomagerlaugets Dødelade* to make sure that the masters were given "an economic contribution for a decent civic funeral." The foundation had its own statutes, and its accounts were written in the foundation's own account book, but matters concerning the foundation and its accounts were to be decided by the shoemakers' guild, and all the masters as well as their wives were to become members of the new foundation. The members were to pay a weekly fee to the foundation, which was to be paid to an appointed steward of the foundation. Whenever a master or a wife of a master died, it was the steward's responsibility to pay a funeral contribution to the widow or widower. The size of the contribution depended on how long the deceased had been a member.<sup>98</sup>

Later, probably after the dissolution of the shoemakers' guild in 1869, but before the issuance of a new set of statutes in *Skomagerlaugets Dødelade* in 1883, membership was opened up to others than master shoemakers and their wives. According to the foundation's new statutes from 1883, "[e]veryone that have

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96 For instance, in 1768 the carpenters' guild and the smiths' guild in Trondheim agreed on carrying their deceased members to the grave together, since "in both guilds no longer are [there] Masters enough to carry their deceased members to the grave"; Lorange 1935, 308: "[...] i begge laugene nu ei ere saa mange Amts-Mæstere, at de hver særdeles kan borbære sine avdøde". My translation.

97 Grevenor 1924, 136–140.

98 The statute is found in one of the foundation's record books, which is kept in the Department of Special Collections at The University Library of Bergen (*Skomagerlaugets dødelade. Fortegnelse 1690-1890*). Similar foundations were founded by the button-maker's guild in Bergen in 1791, of which the statutes are kept in the Department of Special Collections (*Et Liig Fundas for Knapmagerlaugets Mestere*), and the coppersmiths' guild in Bergen in 1859, which existed until 1897. The foundation's statutes have been published by Ryttevad (2010, 101–106).

been given citizenship as a master shoemaker in this town, can become members. Likewise, membership can also be given to other master craftsmen, apprentices and other honourable men and women not being sailors or belonging to the class of wage-earners".<sup>99</sup> In addition, the statutes demanded that new members be over the age of 30, and that they have a certificate from a doctor proving that they were of good health. All members had to pay an entrance fee and an annual membership fee. After fifteen years as members, unmarried members were exempted from paying the membership fee, while married couples were exempted only after thirty years. The statutes from 1883 mention that a steward, as in 1690, was in charge of the foundation, and that it was still the steward's responsibility that funeral contributions be paid when members died, but now the foundation also had three managers and a paid auditor which, together with the steward, constituted the executive of the foundation. The three managers were to be elected at a general meeting which, after the dissolution of the shoemakers' guild in 1869, was the supreme organ of the foundation. The paying of funeral contributions was to take place the day after the steward had received the message that a member had died, and as in 1690, the size of the contribution would vary depending on how long the deceased had been a member.<sup>100</sup> The last entries concerning paid funeral contributions in the foundation's accounts are dated 1910. The foundation itself was formally dissolved five years later, in 1915.<sup>101</sup> With it, the last remains of the guilds' help for deceased members, the financial support to their funerals, had disappeared.

## Conclusion

This article argues that helping deceased members was essential not only for the guilds of late medieval Norway, but also the craft guilds founded after the Reformation, thus stressing a greater degree of continuity between the medieval guilds and the post-Reformation craft guilds than previous research has suggested. Furthermore, this essay argues for a basic continuity in form in the various elements of which the help to the deceased consisted, although the main focus of their help shifted from the late medieval focus on prayers and masses for the soul in purgatory to a focus on giving the deceased an honourable funeral. As shown in the surviving guild statutes from medieval Norway, the members of a guild were obligated to participate in the wake and follow their deceased members to the grave, cover their

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99 *Skomakerlaugets dødelade, 8. Fortegnelse 1690-1890*: "Enhver, der har erhvervet Borgerskab som Skomakermester her i Staden, kan [...] blive optagen som Medlem. Ligesaa skal der være Adgang for andre haandværksmestere, samt Svende og andre ordentlige Mænd og kvinder, der ikke ernære sig som Søfarende og ei heller henhøre til Daglønnerklassen, at blive optagne som Medlemmer." My translation.

100 *Skomakerlaugets dødelade, 2. Forhandlingsprotokoll 1851-1892*.

101 *Skomakerlaugets dødelade, 3. Forhandlingsprotokoll 1892-1906*.

funeral costs and read masses for their souls' salvation from purgatory, for which many guilds founded chantries in churches and monasteries.

The help for the deceased was partly financed through entrance fees, membership fees and fines, and partly through fees paid at the funerals or when the members gathered to hear masses for the souls of the deceased. This assistance was rooted in the Christian norm of *fraternitas* or brotherhood, to treat each other as brothers and sisters. The funeral arrangements did however also have a more practical function, providing the guild members with a social security net that gave them a feeling of certainty that when they died, they would be given an honourable funeral by the guild, and they would be prayed for by the living guild members for eternity.



Picture 4. The priest blesses a corpse to its grave in this mid-fifteenth-century image. It also shows how the coffin could only be used for the transportation of the corpse to the burial site.



Most of the guilds that existed in Norway in the Middle Ages appear to have been dissolved during or in the decades that followed the Danish-Norwegian Reformation of 1536. However, the few urban guilds that survived the Reformation and the new craft guilds that were founded in Norwegian towns during the second half of the sixteenth century and during the seventeenth, continued to provide help for deceased members. Like the medieval guilds, the early modern craft guilds covered the funeral costs of their members, the funeral equipment owned by the craft guilds was used in members' funerals, and the craft guild members were obligated to attend the funerals of their fellow craftsmen, their wives, apprentices, children, and servants. Furthermore, the funeral costs were financed in the same way as in the medieval guilds, partly through entrance fees, membership fees and fines, and partly through fees paid by the members at the funerals. To help the deceased continued to be important for the craft guilds until their dissolution in 1869, and in some cases, as in that of the shoemakers in Bergen, it even outlasted the guild itself.

However, the early modern craft guilds not only continued to help their deceased members, their help seem to have been rooted in the same Christian norm of brotherhood. This could be seen in the guild statutes from the early modern period which, like the statutes of the medieval guilds, often describe the social bonds between the members through the use of family analogies. For instance, in 1568 the statutes from the goldsmiths' guild in Bergen the members are called *Embitzbrødre* (brothers) and *søstre* (sisters), the 1672 statutes from the barbers' guild call their members *amtsbrødre*, *lavsbrødre* and *embedsbrødre*, while the 1607 statutes from the tailors' guild in Oslo call their members *brødre*, *søstre*, *laugsbrødre* and *gildebrødre*.<sup>102</sup>

While such family analogies are found in most of the preserved guild statutes from the second half of the sixteenth century and for most of the seventeenth,<sup>103</sup> few such references are found in the statutes issued during the craft guild reforms of the 1680s and 1690s. This difference might be explained by the fact that most of the statutes dated before the craft guild reforms were compiled by the craft guilds themselves and then sanctioned by the town council or the Danish-Norwegian king, while the statutes issued during the craft guild reforms were provided by the king. Thus, it was the craft guilds themselves who used the family analogies to describe the social bonds between the members, and who called themselves brothers and sisters. Furthermore, the craft guilds themselves continued to use family analogies

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102 *DN XV*, no. 729 (the goldsmiths in Bergen); Carøe 1921 (the barbers in Bergen), *NRR IV*, 174–179 (the tailors in Oslo).

103 See the 1568 statutes of the goldsmith's guild in Bergen (*DN XV*, no. 729); the 1597 and 1672 statutes of the barbers' guild in Bergen (*NRR IV*, Carøe 1921); the 1625 statutes of the smith's guild in Bergen (Deichman, fol. no. 13); the 1626 and 1648 statutes of the baker's guild in Bergen (Deichman, fol. no. 13; *NRR IX*), the 1635 statutes of the shoemakers' guild in Bergen (*NRR VII*); the 1641 statutes of the baker apprentices' guild in Bergen (University of Bergen Library, Department of Special Collections. Ms. 167–70. De bergenske laugsarkiver. Bakerlauget. 6); and the 1607 and 1636 statutes of the tailors' guild in Oslo (*NRR IV*; Grevenor 1924).



after the craft guild reforms as well. For instance, the glassmasters' guild in Bergen called itself a brotherhood in 1801,<sup>104</sup> while the shoemaker apprentices in Bergen called themselves *Skoemagersvendenes Broderskab* (the brotherhood of the shoemaker apprentices) as late as the 1830s.<sup>105</sup>

The continuity between the medieval guilds and the early modern craft guilds, as far as the help they provided to their deceased members is concerned, also had consequences for the understanding of the early modern craft guilds. It has been customary to define the craft guilds as the artisans' economic and political organisations, with few or no social or religious functions. However, as shown in this essay, it is rather the other way around. The social and religious functions, exemplified by the funeral arrangements, were essential to the early modern craft guilds, as they were in the guilds in late medieval Norway.

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104 Bøgh 1904, 44.

105 Grevenor 1924, 173.

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